

The operations of men in business (I cannot too insistently impress), as in other forms, are the outward expression of the activities of feeling: the desires to attain certain objects or ends, intensified or depressed by the greater or less facility afforded by external events to that attainment. These external influences—such as abundant harvest, profitable trading, the absence of the alarms of war, or political or social troubles, the opening of fresh markets—induce the hopeful state of mind which impels energy towards ends; or it may possibly be, as some suggest, that buoyancy of spirits at any period occurs—in the universal rhythm of nature—as the natural reaction from a prior languid condition induced by misadventures in commerce and business generally. Moreover, like sleep, there appears to be some element of periodicity in human consciousness, tending to restore and preserve a level of mental equilibrium, whose cause has not been deciphered.

As a fact of observation and experience, at all events, men generally at some time become inspired by exceptional hope in the future which stimulates unwonted enterprise. Every event at such a period is interpreted as a premonition of prosperity. Money becomes invested in the modes through which this prosperity is to be secured; existing manufactures and trades are extended; the creation of new ventures in industry forms an outlet for redundant energy; and incessant speculation in stocks and shares is a signal mark of this incipient stage. The prevalence of a low rate of interest on borrowed capital at the outset of this industrial course, incites the struggle to grow promptly rich; and although the competition for loans causes a gradual advance in the rate, the confident expectation of a profit far surpassing the price paid for the means of its acquisition neutralises for a time the deterring effect of dearer money.

This vigour of hopefulness, whether it originate in one prominent trade or a class of trades, speedily embraces all by the contagion of sympathy; the vision of prosperity in one direction conjures up the probability of success in others: and

the realisation of unusual profits in one branch of trade naturally overflows, in prof user expenditure, into other branches, and adds a material impetus to the anticipations of hope.